

Message Text

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EXDIS TOSEC 411

FOLL REPEAT PHNOM PENH 2922 ACTION SECSTATE 16 FEB 75 QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 2922

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CB, US, PINT, PINS, OREP, MILI

SUBJECT: CALL ON MARSHAL LON NOL WITH SIR ROBERT THOMPSON

1. I TOOK SIR ROBERT THOMPSON TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT

LON NOL AFTERNOON FEB 15. I AVAILED MYSELF OF THIS

OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE TWO POINTS TO THE MARSHAL:

(A) HE SHOULD STOP QUARRELLING WITH CINC/FANK SOSTHENE

FERNANDEZ, SOMETHING HE HAD ENGAGED IN EARLIER IN THE

DAY. THIS WAS A TIME, I SAID, FOR THE KHMERS TO STAND

TOGETHER AND THEY COULD SORT OUT THEIR DIFFERENCES AT A

LESS CRITICAL TIME. (CLEARLY THE PRESSURE IS GETTING TO

THE KHMERS AND THEY ARE STARTING TO POINT FINGERS AT EACH

OTHER AS TO WHO IS RESPONSIBILE FOR THEIR FAILURES.)

(B) WHEN THE AMERICAN LEGISLATORS COME TO PHNOM PENH,

THE PRESIDENT SHOULD NOT HOST HIS TYPICALLY ELABORATE

LUNCHEON FOR THEM, WHICH WOULD BE COMPLETELY MISUNDERSTOOD

AND WOULD CREATE A BAD IMPRESSION. INSTEAD, I WAS

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THINKING MORE IN TERMS OF BOX LUNCHEES AND PROJECTING

AN ATMOSPHERE OF AUSTERITY AND MILITARY DETERMINATION.
THE MARSHAL AGREED.

2. I WILL NOT REPORT IN DEPTH ON THE REST OF
DISCUSSION WITH SIR ROBERT, AS I UNDERSTAND LATTER
WILL CABLE REPORT ON HIS FINDINGS HERE AFTER HIS RETURN
TO SAIGON. HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO NOTE THAT THE
MARSHAL WAS QUITE A BIT LESS COHERENT ON THIS
OCCASION THAN WHEN I SAW HIM THE PREVIOUS DAY. HE
APPEARS TO BE LIVING IN A DREAM WORLD. FOR EXAMPLE,
HE SAID IN REPLY TO SIR ROBERT THAT SOME DAY IN THE
FUTURE "THOSE WHO BESIEGE US WILL BE THE BESIEGED."
THE MARSHAL FORESAW A TIME WHEN ANTI-COMMUNIST
MOVEMENTS WOULD DEVELOP IN THE COMMUNIST HELD AREAS
OF CAMBODIA WHICH, AS THEY GREW, WOULD CAUSE TROUBLE
FOR THE COMMUNISTS AND BESEIGE THEM IN THE MANNER THE
COMMUNISTS ARE NOW LAYING SIEGE TO PHNOM PENH. SIR
ROBERT AND I LISTENED TO THIS IN SILENCE.

3. THE MARSHAL WAS ALSO IN ONE OF HIS MOST UNCOMPROMISING
MOODS, STRESSING THE SANCTITY OF THE KHMER
REPUBLIC'S CAUSE OF FIGHTING INDO-CHINESE COMMUNISM,
AND THAT HE SAW NO PROSPECT FOR AN EARLY COMPROMISE
SETTLEMENT. THOSE ON THE OTHER SIDE WHO WANT PEACE
CANNOT EXPRESS THEMSELVES, HE SAID, AND THE HARD-LINE
HANOI-DOMINATED KHMER ROUGE DO NOT WANT ANYTHING
LESS THAN A MILITARY SOLUTION TO THE KHMER CONFLICT.
UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, "THE REPUBLICAN KHMERS WILL
FIGHT ON, EVEN IF THEY HAVE TO DO SO WITHOUT AMERICAN
ASSISTANCE", HE ASSERTED.

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4. COMMENT: I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THE MARSHAL WAS
PUTTING ON THIS ACT OF "GOTTERDAMMERUNG" FOR SIR ROBERT
OR WHETHER HE REALLY BELIEVES THIS LINE. IN ANY CASE,
I INTEND TO TALK WITH THE MARSHAL NEXT WEEK ABOUT WHAT
HE MAY WISH TO SAY TO THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION.
IF HE RANTS AND RAVES AS HE DID YESTERDAY WITH SIR
ROBERT, I THINK HE WILL SERIOUSLY JEOPARDIZE

CAMBODIA'S CHANCE OF RECEIVING SUPPLEMENTAL ASSISTANCE.
HOPEFULLY, THE AUGMENTED CIVILIAN AIRLIFT, WHICH IS
RECEIVING PUBLICITY NOW, WILL CALM HIS NERVES AND
MAKE HIM SOMEWHAT MORE RATIONAL. IT WAS CERTAINLY A
LOT EASIER TO WORK WITH A LOGICAL, PRAGMATIC STATEMAN
LIKE SOUVANNA PHOUMA THAN WITH THE MYSTICAL, INARTICULATE
LON NOL.
DEAN

UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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